

presume to erect their own self-conceited stupidity on the pedestal of public opinion would have reasonable men regard them as oracles of truth. They would foist their own folly upon an ignorant and unreflecting audience in preference to the truth of God; they would dethrone virtue to exalt vice; they would destroy reality to supplant it with vacant nothingness; they would disturb the perfect consonance of revealed religion by introducing the jarring discord of error; they would mar the beautiful unity of a wonderful system of consistent and authoritative teaching by the introduction of their own foolish opinions and incoherent and gratuitous assertions. It is not a difficult thing, nor indeed a rare thing, for the most certain and incontestable facts and truths to be impugned by the malice or ignorance of others.

What is more certain than one's own identity, yet it might require a lengthy and costly process to establish it to the satisfaction of one who does not wish to be persuaded of it. The man who chooses—by an abuse indeed of his reason and will—to ruthlessly desecrate and deny all that is good and true, by sneering at this and scoffing at that, by casting doubt on one fact or principal, and flatly denying others equally certain and incontestable—such a man may wreck his own faith and judgment and that of others, also, but his conduct is comparable only to that of a maniac, who, finding himself surrounded by costly machinery capable of realizing the most delicate and accurate results by means of a complicated and intricate system of mechanical movements, should take upon himself to deny the possibility of attaining such results by roughly and uncereemoniously abusing the operator and committing sad havoc with the machinery.

The only reasonable method of thinking, speaking, and acting, is to conform one's thoughts, words, and actions, to

what is right and true and good, and to start in the pursuit of justice, truth, and virtue, not from foolish, highflown theories, proceeding from the folly and self-conceit of any individual who chancies to constitute himself the supreme authority, but from certain facts and sterling truths under the guidance of sufficient and proper authority.

Just as the man who would arrogate to himself the right of complete freedom of action irrespective of all law, human or divine, would very properly soon find his false ideas of liberty rudely put an end to by being committed to a prison; so also the man that lays claim to unbridled license of thought irrespective of truth, and considers himself at liberty to give expression to his ravings in defiance of common decency and in complete disregard of all law, human and divine—such a one would very properly become an inmate of the asylum, provided by the authorities for such as are deranged in their mental faculties.

If, therefore, the unbridled license not only of action, but of thought also, is so contrary to common sense and the first principles of justice and truth, it is still more dangerous to faith and piety. Contagious diseases are best avoided by keeping far from the infection and hindering any sort of contact with the disease. Just so with the fulsome pest called freethought. We therefore earnestly exhort all those committed to our episcopal charge, to shun freethought and all its surroundings; to avoid the society of those whose minds are infected with it. Pollute not your imagination with the vile and scurrilous blasphemy which is found in every page of freethinking literature; give no encouragement to freethought meetings and lectures, and do not endanger your own morals by being present at them. It would be wrong and sinful to act otherwise.

But there is another danger to faith